SOUTH VIET NAM In Struggle

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Address: HT 1217 B-SVN
c/o DAZIMINA HANOI
19, Hai Ba Trung, Hanoi, DRVN
and all RSVN Embassies, Information Bureaux in foreign countries

CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE SOUTH VIET NAM NATIONAL FRONT FOR LIBERATION

"Stop the killing in Viet Nam," says Ni

the killing in Viet Nam

a single name: Ni

levelling the jungle

(Concluded)

AT the time of our visit, the unbulldozed terrain was covered largely by a tangle of head-high, broadleafed brushy plants and vines intermingled with *Imperata* grass and shrubby bamboos. Of the scattered trees, more than half were dead. The plow blades were set to skim the surface, each tractor scraping bare almost an acre per hour. The big trees came crashing to the ground with great regularity. Most were simply pushed over, but the really large ones were first split by the stinger.

The terrain was flat and the soil a heavy grey podzolic, so that neither erosion nor laterization (hardening of soils to a brick-like substance) are likely to be problems here. In view of available seed (or other reproductive plant parts) and shadeless conditions, this area is likely to be quickly dominated by a combination of *Imperata* grass and shrubby bamboos, thereby largely precluding reforestation for years (perhaps decades) to come. In other areas we inspected in Binh Duong province that had been bulldozed two or three years previously, by far the most prevalent vegetation was the worthless and pernicious weed *Imperata*. Indeed, of the thousands of acres of formerly bulldozed areas that we were able to see on this and our previous visits, there was only one area where forest trees (a commercially lowgrade species of *Dipterocarpus*) were recolonizing naturally. Where bulldozing is done in more hilly terrain, erosion can become a severe liability. Moreover, with the elimination of the enormous water-holding capacity of an extant forest, the heavy rains characteristic of Viet Nam can produce severe flood damage. We learned of one devastating flash flood in a recently bulldozed area in Khanh Hoa province.

It cannot be denied that there are advantages to the bulldozing, given the conditions of this grim war. First, bulldozing largely clears areas of landmines, an everpresent horror throughout much of Viet Nam to all who attempt to reutilize a war-visited area. (One Vietnamese whom we came to know has so far lost six relatives to mines left behind by one side or the other.) Secondly, some of the timber can subsequently be salvaged, particularly for firewood and charcoal manufacture. Thirdly, some of the bulldozed lands in "secure" areas have been taken over for agricultural pursuits, although this is often not feasible even in such areas because of extensive craterization by explosives. Farming is particularly evident in the roadside strips near population centers. A small fraction of the clearing by bulldozers is actually said to be done with subsequent resettlement or agricultural pursuits in mind (see, for example, *New York Times*, July 15, 1971, p. 3).

Bulldozing has, according to official military sources, leveled over 750,000 acres to date. I estimate that clearing continues at a rate of more than 1,000 acres per day. Because I was unable to obtain a breakdown of land and land use categories that have fallen to the relentless bulldozers, it is difficult to estimate the overall economic loss that can be attributed to these operations. However, some partial indications can be presented. With respect to the timber resource, the South Vietnamese forest service has determined that at least 126,000 acres of prime timber lands accessible to lumber operations have been destroyed through 1970, together with an estimated twenty million board feet of marketable tropical hardwood timber. At recent Saigon market values averaging about 72 per thousand board feet, this amounts to a loss of 14.7 million. To this sum must be added a future loss due to destruction of growing stock. With respect to the rubber resource, the French rubber interests in South Viet Nam have determined that substantially more than 2,500 acres of producing rubber trees (representing just over 1 percent of South Viet Nam's total rubber) have so far been destroyed by bulldozers. There are about 120 rubber trees per acre, with an average value of 88 per tree. Total loss here can thus be estimated to exceed 26.4 milllion. (I might add that to the consternation of the French owners, they have received no compensation.)

There are, of course, many other losses attributable to the bulldozer program, most of which are impossible to quantify. Among them can be listed site degradation, erosion, weed invasion, destruction of wildlife habitat, flood damage, and miscellaneous, property loss. One recent press report from western Hau Nghia province tells of the obliteration by bulldozers of a still partially inhabited farming region and the consequent disruptive impact (*New York Times*, May 7, 1971, p.5). Even whole villages have been obliterated (*Nation*, Oct. 23, 1967, p.397). Discussions with professional Vietnamese foresters revealed yet another headache connected with the landclearing operations. In its nationwide forest conservation program, the South Vietnamese forest service issues timber-cutting permits on a judiciously restricted basis. However, corrupt province chiefs have, during the past year or so, come to realize that a denied loca, cutting permit can often be circumvented by turning to the Vietnamese Defense Department, and, for pretended reasons of military necessity, request that the area be designated for bulldozing. If the request is granted, the chiefs can then cut the timber for personal profit. Finally, another use of the bulldozers results in a small amount of additional and unnecessary damage. In their lighter moments the engineers occasionally turn to carving up the landscape for the sheer hell of it. Thus one can now find a U.S. First Infantry Division emblem, covering some 1,500 acres, carved into the landscape about 25 miles northwest of Saigon (*New York Times*, April 5, 1970, p.7); a giant peace symbol is similarly engraved near Hue (*Life* magazine, July 2, 1971, p. 72).

In conclusion, the question is raised — although not answered — of how much forest loss can be sustained by an area before the regional ecology is adversely affected to a substantial extent. Before the war, more than 25 million acres of South Viet Nam were covered by forest, representing about 60 percent of the country's total area of 43 million acres. So far, the war has claimed at the very least 3 million acres of the forest cover. The herbicide program has accounted for somewhat more than a third of this, the bulldozing somewhat less than a third, and the bomb, rocket, and shell craters (plus damage from other munitions) the remainder. Although the estimated 12 percent reduction in forest cover may not have a dramatic influence on the overall ecology of South Viet Nam, detailed investigation will elucidate the magnitude of the subtle changes that have resulted. In the numerous local areas of severe damage, often covering several thousands of contiguous acres, the repercussions — both ecological and sociological — will be profound.

ARTHUR WESTING

Our land has been riddled with craters of B-52 carpet-bombings and ploughed by bulldozers.

in the Cities

+ On June 3, over 200 representatives of Saigon dockers held a meeting to denounce their ruthless exploitation through the system of gangers and called on all dockers to take united action in defence of their vital interests. A resolution was approved, urging abolition of the said system and direct participation of worker representatives in overseeing and payment of wages, and demanding that port authorities supply free midday meals, working clothing and pay all due allowances to worker's family upon his death.

+ On June 9, the Union of Saigon-Gia Dinh cyclocab drivers denounced the Thieu crack down on them and the ban on their professional activity, under the pretext of preserving law and order in the city. About 70% of the drivers who had not yet got their licences faced unemployment as their vehicles were seized and the owners arrested. Meanwhile the issuance of driving licences proned Thieu's agents with the opportunity to extort money from the applicants. The Union demanded that the Thieu clique release all the arrested people and issue without delay licences and passes to the drivers.

+ In implementation of Thieu's 9 fascist measures, quisling authorities in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area have ordered all universities closed for "security" reasons. According to the paper Chinh Luan, *in this summer vacation the Thieu clique will force pupils and students to join the so-called "Union of Pupils and Students for the Protection of the Rear area", which is a para-military organisation in disguise. Students and pupils will have to undergo training in the use of different types of weapons and psywar propaganda, and to do guard duty. This US-Saigon move has been criticised by pupils, teachers and others.*

+ During a recent meeting with the press, victims of US bombing forcibly grouped into the Long Thanh concentration camp scored Thieu's agents in the Bien Hoa Office of Social Affairs for stealing relief food donated by various mass organisations. They also disclosed that due to poor sanitary facilities and the harsh condition in the camp, in a short period of time, 7 children died of cholera. They pressed for more efficient distribution of relief food and medicines and punishment of those who took advantage of their position to appropriate relief goods.

+ Recently, many Saigon MP's lashed out at Thieu's proclamation of martial law and curfew. The Vice-Chairman of the House Budget and Finance Committee emphasized that that curfew and extension of the curfew hours had seriously affected the everyday life of various sections of the people. He urged measures to restore the people's life to normal and lift the state of emergency.

+ The Thieu regime has released a so-called V.C. list of assassinations and executions to be carried out against nearly 10,000 people including opposition leaders or independents. However many who found their names on the list of those owing "blood debts" poohpoohed the document as a fabrication of the Thieu government prepared with US help to scare them into supporting Thieu. They asserted that the 10 policies of the PRG had made it clear that the people and the PRG will welcome those who cross over to their side and show leniency to those who still serve with the Saigon administration but sympathize with the Revolution.

In Our Liberated Zone

THE LOTUS SEASON

I met schoolmaster Hanh just back at his school at Thuan Phong village (My Tho province). After giving his pupils a "reading" lesson, he cheerfully told me:

"I thought I would never be able to return to this village school and hoist a liberation flag on its roof as I have done today. The enemy had burnt all my books, my house, occupied my school and turned it into a military post. For 8 years, they dragged me through 12 jails on charge that I had taught patriotic poems to my pupils here. 'The Yanks are invading our country,' I stated emphatically to my gaolers 'so it's necessary to teach Vietnamese children our forebears' examples of sacrifice for the country's sake. I'm ready to serve my prison term and I am confident that one day Viet Nam will be freed.' But as I was growing old and weak--I was over 50—I thought it would be difficult for me to return to my trade. Nevertheless after the liberation of our village by our troops, I came back to my school. Today I feel hale and hearty again, so I resume the teaching. My age is no longer a problem to me, for I can read in each pupil's eyes an earnest request that I go on with my job, and the local revolutionary power is very helpful."

After a pause, as if to recollect old memories, and after sipping a cup of strong tea, Hanh went on to say:

"When this village was liberated, the Revolutionary People's Committee at once had a new school built, and the comrade in charge of culture and education sent for books

and other school articles from the provincial authorities. Within a week, I had every facility to start school again. On opening day, the Chairman of the Village Committee standing under President Ho's portrait and a Liberation flag, said: 'Before he passed away, Uncle Ho told us that he longed for national independence and hoped that everyone would have adequate food and clothing and education. Now that our village has been totally liberated, we are resolved to fulfil our President's wishes; we in the Committee pledge our best to help the teachers run classes for our children.' Since then, these words of the Committee's Chairman have been translated into deeds: 2 new buildings have been added to our school, with tables and benches and all other things, including toys for children, and shelters for them from enemy bombs and shells."

Looking at his pupils playing in the courtyard, headmaster Hanh confided to me in a low voice:

"The pupils were kept in ignorance by the enemy's occupation. If you interview pupils, you may hear many moving stories. For instance, there are pupils who do not remember the faces of their own parents, or who have only heard a description of their parents' faces from relatives, since they died in a jail or in the course of a sweep when they were still small babies. There are others who do not know where they were born, because their mothers have always been on the move, and given birth to them at some halt. Other pupils' fathers were Saigon soldiers, killed in Southern Laos, or taken prisoner by our liberation forces, or have gone over to the people's side, etc. On learning of the liberation of their village, those who had been living in exile came back like birds returning to their nests. As our school has re-opened, they have sent their children to be trained into useful citizens. Their sincere and meaningful wishes have enhanced our sense of responsibility. For aren't we liberation teachers?"

It was 8.15, and Hanh had to resume his lesson with the children.

On the blackboard, I saw the drawing of a model lotus, and on the teacher's desk was a vase of white lotus. A breeze brought in from the nearby river through the class window wafts of the fragrance of Thuan Phong lotus now in their full bloom.

Standing on his platform, the grey-haired teacher affectionately gazed at his pupils, and felt gratified that a "lotus season" was also blossoming in the copy-books of more than 50 pupils of his primary school.

And I also sensed that a "lotus season" had also set in the heart of this dedicated teacher of liberated Thuan Phong village.

MINH PHUONG

The appeal of a great cause

THE RSVN PRG January 25, 1972 10-point policy toward Saigon officers and men has shown them a way out of their shameful condition as mercenaries of the Pentagon and the traitor Nguyen Van Thieu. It is a splendid illustration of the spirit of national union and concord among various nationalities of the NFL and the RSVN PRG.

It has been drawing a warm response from the majority of the Saigon armymen. In variegated forms, these have disobeyed orders to conduct rescue operations or sweeps against their own countrymen. Anti-war actions, collective mutinies, defections to the revolution, surrenders to the PLAF have been on the upgrade.

Since the anti-war protest staged by all officers and men of Regiment 56 in Quang Tri, collective mutinies have grown into a vigorous and extensive drive among the Saigon soldiery of all services across South Viet Nam. Not a few company and field officers have enthusiastically hailed the 10-point policy, and pledged allegiance to the nation, flayed US schemes and atrocities against the people and Saigon officers and men under the "Vietnamization" plan.

Over the recent days, in Tra Vinh, My Tho, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, An Giang, Ca Mau, Soc Trang, Can Tho provinces (Mekong Delta), northern Gia Dinh, Binh Long, Phuoc Long, Ba Ria, Long Khanh (eastern Nam Bo), Quang Da, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Phu Yen and Binh Dinh provinces (Central Trung Bo) platoons of "people's self-defence," security and civil guard have rebelled by the thousands, flattened a series of military posts and gone over to the people's side, in full kit. In certain localities, Saigon units have asked and been allowed by the revolutionary power to join the guerillas and liberate their native land.

Hundreds of squads, platoons and companies of Saigon regulars of various arms and services, have given themselves up to the Liberation combatants at the outset of the PLAF offensives, namely in Can Tho, Soc Trang, Tra Vinh provinces, etc., or revolted and killed their commanders and defected, like in many localities of Central Trung Bo.

All the above proves that the PRG 10-point policy has not only pointed to the Saigon armymen an escape from a senseless death, but also dispelled their doubt about the revolution. It has opened their eyes to the viciousness and brutality of the Yanks and Nguyen Van Thieu.

The PRG policy has instilled into those families with members forcibly sent to die in the place of the GIs, trust in the revolution and in the humanitarianism of their own fellow-countrymen. Prior to, and after, the PLAF sweeping attacks, in the tidal waves of popular uprisings, thousands of victimized families have consequently put up a stiff resistance to the impressing of youths and troops upgrading, broken into enemy garrisons to publicize the 10-point policy among the soldiers. In several provinces of the Mekong Delta, Buddhist believers and the Cao Dai sect followers together with thousands of families whose members are still in the Saigon army, have held meetings to bare the US-Thieu sending young men to the battlefield to die for the US, or demonstrated and marched onto the towns and district capitals, hospitals and military posts to claim the return of their dear ones. They have also made known the PLAF fresh gains and called upon Saigon officers and men to turn their guns on the aggressors to wipe them out and save their country and themselves.

The PRG 10-point policy has also had wide and deep repercussions among intellectuals, pupils and students in Hue, Saigon, Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Can Tho, Bien Hoa... Teen-agers and youngsters have stayed away from classes en masse to protest "militarization" of schools and universities, upgrading of troops and forcible enlistment of young and old into the "people's self-defence" units. Such a turmoil has contributed to rocking the last of US-Thieu sanctuaries.

It is clear that since its publication, the PRG 10-point policy has aroused stronger national feeling among Saigon officers and men, and helped tens of thousands of families recover their husbands, sons and brothers. It has also stimulated the anti-Thieu drives of students and other people in South Viet Nam towns and cities.

Under the impact of the PLAF impetuous onslaughts and popular irresistible uprisings, more and more Saigon servicemen have responded to the PRG call, and in so doing they have displayed a desire to do their bits in the anti-US resistance for national salvation, independence, democracy, peace and eventual reunification of the country.

THANH VAN

In the first half of June

- enemy communications under continued harassment
- **the Mekong delta rocked by offensives and uprisings**

The "strong men" of Vietnamization boarding helter-skelter buses in their flight for dear life

*

Saigon wounded soldiers waiting in despair for choppers

FIGHTING continued raging on the An Loc, Kontum and Tri-Thien fronts. The PLAF were tightening their noose around, and hitting hard at, the enemy in their defence complexes while cutting off strategic lines, and aggravating their isolation. Adverse supply and reinforcements met with serious difficulties. "Fighting is continuing at a high level, *AP* reported on June 13. *AFP* said the same day: "After making a thrust into Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia, the Communists are infiltrating into the Plain of Reeds and making an incursion into Kien Tuong province and are apparently cutting off Highway 14 from Saigon to the Southernmost region of the Mekong Delta."

Many successive onsets were also launched on the US-Saigon defence lines across South Viet Nam. A record number of shellings (74) and ground assaults (36), totalling 110 attacks, occurred in most parts of South Viet Nam, a new high since the PLAF offensive started 77 days ago (*AFP* June 14).

On the An Loc front

The PLAF continued encircling and devastatingly attacking the remaining enemy in the town. Saigon General Nguyen Van Minh, commander of this sector, described the siege as the "most difficult and drawn-out battle in my military career." And he still could not predict its end (*AFP* June 1st).

Highway 14, the only road for moving supplies and reinforcements to An Loc, remained sealed off. The US-Saigon Command had to muster a big force to clear it but continued to take a good dressing-down. The 24th Division virtually lost its fighting strength during the clearing operations on this road. In only 2 days, June 6 and 7, Task Force unit number 6, the 1st Paratroop Brigade and the 15th Regiment of the Saigon 9th Division incurred the loss of more than 420 men. On June 13 and 14, all the three regiments of the 21st Division came under surprise attack, taking a toll of 200.

Increasing PLAF pressure has been responsible for the fact that all along the past two months, no military vehicle has been able to make its way straight from Chon Thanh to An Loc and the efforts to reopen this road have resulted in Saigon heavy losses.

On the Kontum front

In ten days from early June the PLAF continually assaulted the enemy in the periphery of the town and in the town itself, seriously punishing one regiment and three battalions of the Saigon regular army, killing or wounding more than 1,800 men, shot down or destroyed 23 aircraft and wrecked 19 military vehicles mostly tanks and armoured cars.

The beleaguered adversary who sallied out more than half a mile from the city were intercepted (the 45th Regiment on June 10). Neither could they escape blows by digging in their fortresses (the 47th Regiment on June 11). PLAF artillery many times pounded the enemy logistic storages and artillery sites in the town, wreaking great damage. One of the shelling set a military supplies dump blazing for many hours, shooting up flames more than 150 feet into the air. The US-Saigon Command threw all the troops they could into a clearing action on Highway 14, only to suffer heavy casualties. In the three days from June 11 to 13, their rangers and border guards were badly trounced, losing nearly 300 men (including two companies wiped out) and 13 tanks destroyed. On June 9, PLAF anti-aircraft units of Kontum province blasted to pieces the helicopter carrying John Paul Vann, Head of the American advisers' group in Corps II area, killing this general with a long record of crimes against the South Viet Nam people, together with many officers of his staff. In defiance of the intensive shelling and bombing by the enemy who attempted to break the narrowing encirclement, the PLAF in the High Plateaux continued to strike hard at the enemy in Kontum while chopping up their communications, holding up the traffic on strategic Highway number 14 and co-ordinating with the people in the areas in shattering actions on their military and administrative outfits in most of the districts in the province.

On the Tri-Thien front

The PLAF struck at the enemy in My Chanh area, badly bloodying the 1st Regiment of the 1st Division and the 1st Battalion of the Marine Division. From June 8 to 10, they got at adverse positions in the Bastogne area, knocking out two companies of the 1st regiment and shelled enemy artillery emplacements, causing heavy losses in manpower and war materials. All told, in eight days 470 enemy were put ont of combat. An *AFP* correspondent from the Hue front reported on June 4 that "Communist gunners are stepping up their activity, and are firing with increasing accuracy, some of their rounds killing a lot of (Saigon) soldiers stationed on the My Chanh line."

In the Mekong Delta and the Plains of Central Viet Nam

Guerilla warfare was mounting powerfully. Many battalions of the enemy, including regular and civil-guard battalions, were written off or battered in the provinces of Kien Tuong, Kien Phong, My Tho (in the Mekong Delta) and in Quang Nam, Quang Ngai (in the plains of Central Viet Nam). The civil guard and militia were disbanded by whole companies and a series of their posts were razed or forced to evacuate. In Northern Gia Dinh, posing a direct threat to Saigon itself, the PLAF continued to encircle enemy posts, interdicting Highway 1 and engaged in fighting enemy troops on clearing operations, wiping out nearly 500 men. The people along Highways 1, 7 and 19 assisted by Liberation forces, rose up against the enemy rule and regained control. *AFP* wrote on June 14: "Observers here noted that this is a systematic and well-co-ordinated offensive of which the targets may be Saigon and the rich provinces in the Mekong Delta. Meanwhile US-Saigon pacification program is falling to pieces in the plains of Central Viet Nam. According to *AFP* on June 6, the situation of pacification was at its gloomiest. Three districts in the North had been under Communist control for more than one month now. The fourth district, Phu My, was under serious threat. American advisers were evacuating the area.

In Quang Ngai province, the project in all the four districts was also in deep waters. In Quang Nam province there was a flare-up of co-ordinated operations of the main force and guerilla units of the Viet Cong too, the agency reported.

cutting off enemy "arteries"

TOGETHER with powerful attacks by PLAF main force units on US-Saigon defence perimeters, a series of operations were mounted by South Viet Nam armed forces and people against enemy communication lines, chopping them up and reducing traffic to a standstill. The adversary had to dig in, and the tighter he was surrounded, the more difficulties he encountered in receiving reinforcements and supplies. The battle of the roads became fierce at the beginning of April and has been going on on all highways: No 19, No 22, No 1, No 4, No 23, etc., and with particular intensity on Highway No 13 between Chon Thanh and An Loc, as well as on Highway No 14, between Pleiku and Kontum.

Highway No 13, the "trans-Indochina" line, is over 1,000 km long and links Saigon with Luang Prabang. It is the main artery passing through Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. The enemy of Indochina's revolution has been exerting every effort to keep control over it, but he has sustained repeated setbacks. The portion of the highway running on South Vietnamese territory which accounts only for one-eighth of its total length, is a real "street without joy" that has witnessed the routs of crack US and Saigon units. Since November 12, 1965, it has seen successively the US 1st Infantry Division, the "Big Red One," then Armoured Regiment 11, Para Brigade 173, Division 25 "Tropical Lightning," Air Cav. Division 1, badly trounced. As regards the Saigon army, Highway No 13 was a "road of blood and tears" for Division 5, a unit hitherto rated as one of the best, and sent there by the US-Saigon Command to watch that strategic trunkline. Both sides of the road had been cleared by US bombings and chemical sprayings. Bulldozers and tanks had levelled off all houses, pagodas and any traces of life there. And yet the PLAF continued to deal deadly blows at Division 5, heavily decimating it and preventing it from fulfilling its task. As early as in the winter and spring of 1965-66, Division 5 was described by its own officers and troopsmen as a "done for" unit. But it is in this summer that the fiercest onslaughts were made on the enemy on Highway No 13. In less than a month, Division 5 was bloodied beyond recovery and Division 9, 18, 21 and the Para Division, which had been hurriedly dispatched to its rescue, met with quite the same fate.

Highway No 13 controls an important gate North of Saigon. A system of "forward defence" with alternating layers, had been set up by the Americans there. But under the impact of PLAF relentless attacks since the beginning of April 1972, the defence perimeter at Loc Ninh close to the Cambodian border, was "lost" on April 5. On April 7, Mobile Group 9 surrendered whereas on the same day Mobile Group 51 and an artillery battalion were written off.

In the flush of their victory, the PLAF attacked An Loc town and laid siege to Chon Thanh urban centre. The traffic between Chon Thanh and An Loc was completely paralysed. The US-Saigon command ordered their troops to force their way through the encirclement, but to no avail, — only to sustain heavier losses. Foreign correspondents described Saigon efforts to clear a passage on Highway No 13 as a scene of panic and war-weariness, almost a debacle with armoured vehicles crushing to death retreating infantrymen while paratroopers exhausted after the fight had to quench their thirst with muddy water from potholes. The road itself was strewn with charred bodies of aircraft, tanks, armoured vehicles and trucks. The US-Saigon Command set up a series of enclaves all along Highway No 13, then linked with new ones spaced at regular intervals. A new tactics named "inch worm," born of a state of sinking morale among Saigon troops, spread soldiers thin on the Highway. This did not prevent the enclaves from being shattered and the slow-moving units from being thrashed. In the last days of May, Regiment 15 of Saigon Division 9, and Mobile Group 33 of Division 21 then Para Brigade 1, and the newly-formed Armoured Group 9... were either wiped out or badly battered. The enclaves at Duc Vinh and Thanh Binh were erased one after another. A large number of troops were thus sacrificed to clear Highway No 13 but traffic remained blocked, and Western news agencies described Division 21 as "utterly exhausted" while other units reportedly took "heavy casualties."

A column of enemy armoured cars completely shattered on the pass of An Khe (Highway 19, Central Trung Bo)

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Like Highway No 13, Highway No 14 also acquired a new fame during this offensive of the South Vietnamese patriots on account of the resounding feats by the armed forces and people of the Central Highlands. On a 35-mile section between Pleiku and Kontum, fighting was very fierce and successes scored by Liberation forces remarkable. The battle lasted 70 continuous days and could be divided into three stages:

The first stage spanned from the end of March to April when the armed forces and people of Gia Lai province launched a series of interdiction strikes on strategic Highway No 14. Convoys were intercepted and the people living on roadsides were helped by the PLAF to destroy bridges, cut the road to pieces and erect obstacles on it, considerably impeding enemy supplies and making it possible for main force units of the liberation army to breach the defence perimeters North and Northwest of Kontum. No day passed without at least one convoy being intercepted on Highway No 14 north of Pleiku town. In one of those operations, 48 enemy vehicles were put out of action, and in the first ten days of April the PLAF either captured or destroyed 171 vehicles. On April 24 when the Tan Canh-Dakto defence perimeter and fire-bases on the high mountains North and Northwest of Kontum town fell into PLAF hands, the US-Saigon commanders in the Central Highlands complained that "no convoy of recueing troops could come as Highway No 14 had been cut by the Communists," and that "Government troops stationed in a number of positions lacked ammunition and even drinking water for 3 days on end" (*AP* and *UPI*).

The 2nd stage lasted from April 26 to May-25: the armed forces and people of Gia Lai province foiled the 1st stage of enemy operation codenamed "Bac Binh Vuong" aimed at clearing Highway No 14. After 25 days of furious fighting, our men knocked out a brigade operational C.P., seriously mauled 5 battalions, put out of action 1,500 enemy troops, destroyed 137 military vehicles, including 46 tanks and armoured cars, captured or destroyed 15 cannons. The big bridge north of Pleiku was blown up. Soundly beaten, the enemy dug in near Pleiku, but Highway No 14 remained sealed off. The enemy beseiged in Kontum was completely isolated. *AP* and *AFP* remarked that the Saigon troops in Kontum had only one escape route left — by air, but helicopters and aircraft parachuting supplies had to face the greatest danger on this front.

The 3rd stage was from May 21 to 29: the armed forces and people of Gia Lai completely thwarted the 2nd stage of Operation "Bac Binh Vuong" and drove the US-Saigon troops in the Central Highlands into direst straits. As Division 23 was beleaguered and subjected to constant attacks inside Kontum town, the enemy mobilized a big contingent of main force mobile units made up of 2 ranger regiments and one ranger battalion, to operate jointly with one regiment and three battalions of armoured vehicles fully supported by US air force, in an effort to "clear" Highway No 14. US aircraft flew on some days up to 100 sorties and carried out round-the-clock bombing and strafing. But once again, the enemy was soundly drubbed. The rangers and armour had to retreat. 3 ranger and 2 armoured battalions were seriously depleted, more than 1,000 enemy troops wiped out, 55 military vehicles (including 37 tanks) and 9 guns destroyed.

HITTING at enemy communication lines is one of the most important tasks of the South Viet Nam armed forces and people in the present wave of offensives and uprisings at a time when the US-Saigon troops are digging in in their defensive positions in important sectors. With their water- and land-ways cut off, their air lines constantly threatened, their supply made insecure, the morale of their troops rapidly collapses and their defence meets with tremendous difficulties: the PLAF are in a position to inflict heavy casualties on them. The US-Saigon Command is greatly worried by this situation. At An Loc, "there are still over 1,000 wounded soldiers who cannot be evacuated" (*AFP*, May 31), and "the situation of government defence units in Kontum is still very hard" (*UPI* June 2).

With their heavy interdiction actions, the South Vietnamese armed forces and people have been diverting a major part of the enemy's forces into the "clearing" and defence of highways right at a time when he is scraping off his strategic reserve units and throwing them into various battlefields, and when his mobile forces are being scattered thin in all directions. Shortage of troops and makeshifts only compound enemy military commanders' difficulties in dealing with the South Vietnamese patriots' assaults on communication lines. US "advisers" commanding Saigon troops in "clearing" operations on Highway No 13 complained that they needed a large number of troops to open the traffic, while the adverse side needed only small contingent to cut off a highway. And yet the adversary was quite in strength there, they added.

In the last two and half months, the South Vietnamese armed forces and people, harassing the enemy engaged in "clearing" operations on highways, have knocked out of combat a substantial amount of adverse manpower and war means. The Saigon troops are finding themselves in a quandary as a result of reverses on various battlefronts. Now forced to undertake "clearing" operations, and consequently to fight outside their fortifications, they are very low-spirited and all literally "exhausted," and from main force and strategic reserve units to armour and rangers outfits.

The gains of our armed forces and people on the communication front are of strategic significance as part of their all-sided and considerable successes in the last ten weeks.

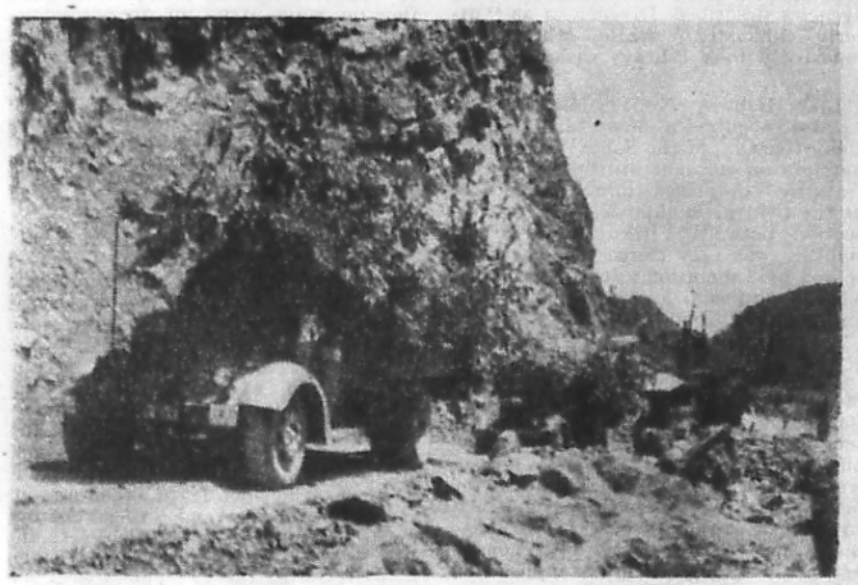
THANH HONG

TO THE FRONT LINE

A steady hand and an "outstanding" tug-boat

AT one of the busiest ferry in Quang Binn province, Vo Xuan Khue (newly commended as labour hero by the DRVN National Assembly) has set an example of courage and cleverness in line with the "Keep traffic open in the teeth of enemy strikes."

With his "outstanding" tug-boat Vo Xuan Khue has unflinchingly faced the adversary in nearly 1,500 fierce attacks. Eight times thrown up by magnetic bombs and torpedoes, he has held out and towed his ferry boat across. He is also a veteran in the job of defusing delay-action bombs and torpedoes of all kinds. During the 300 toughest days and nights of fighting, the US aggressors dropped over 10,000 demolition bombs and about 5,000 others, but Vo Xuan Khue stood firm at his post, kept the traffic open and achieved great feats with his "outstanding" tug-boat. He strictly observes technical regulations, maintains his engine in good repair, achieves a high safety rate and saves tons of fuel every year.



The Quang Trung Transport Convoy on its way to the frontline.

River crossing

A river separates us:

I'll bend a rose branch to help you across.

In the past, such was a romantic way to cross a river. But at present, our people have devised no end of original ways to maintain the traffic in their resistance against US aggression, for national salvation. A few of them are described below:

Bamboo bridge

Both ends of the bridge are planted with big clusters of bamboo trees bent toward each other. When the trees are grown up, the tops of each bush are tied to the bottom of the other. The bridge surface is covered with a bamboo trellis.

Such a bridge costs little and lasts long. The longest in Nam Ha province is 13 yards and can be used by touring cars.

Pontoon bridge

Wooden and bamboo sampans are spaced alongside on a river crossing. The bridge surface is a prefabricated structure of an assembly kind and can be fitted on the sampans when needed. When the bridge becomes useless, the sampans will be returned to service on the river.

An eloquent figure

Up to date the transport and communications branch has been credited with 25 labour heroes and heroines and seven heroic collectives, including an all-female team called C-9.

Moreover, two labour heroines and three labour collectives of the same branch belong to the people's armed forces.

The transport and communication branch has been awarded 6 Independence Order medals, 155 Exploit Order medals and 1,321 Labour Order medals.

In 1971, it boasted at the centre level 465 socialist labour teams, 59 of them holding this title for 5 to 11 years.

ATTACKS ON DYKES
a new war crime of Nixon

IN its renewed aggression against the DRVN, the US is perpetrating a new heinous crime in striking at the system of dykes and irrigation works in an attempt to roll back socialist construction and exterminate millions of people in North Viet Nam.

A statement of the DRVN Ministry of Water Conservancy made known that from April 16 to June 10, 1972, US aircraft on 68 occasions bombed and strafed 32 dyke portions, and 31 irrigation projects in North Viet Nam. About 665 bombs of various types were dropped and thousands of artillery shells fired from the 7th Fleet, heavily damaging dozens of vital dyke sections belonging to the Red River system, the dykes of Ma, Thai Binh, Day and Lam Rivers...

On June 19, 20, 24 and 26, 1972, a 10-mile long dyke portion north of Ma River was hit by some 60 big-size bombs and seriously damaged. On June 7, 14 US F4's dropped several demolition and boring bombs on the dyke in Say Luong village, Thai Binh province, making a 90-foot long breach. Earlier on May 21, 1972, a dyke portion of about 1,000 yards long in Thai Thuy district, same province, received 180 demolition bombs. On June 7, 1972, US aircraft dumped 12 bombs on Tran dam in Do Luong district, Nghe An province, and on June 10, the Thac Ba dam in Yen Bai province was attacked by 55 enemy war planes.

Worse still, the US aggressors also used anti-personnel bombs like steel-pellet bombs against numerous people who were repairing the dyke portions just bombed out of action.

The assault on the system of dykes and irrigation works is a major crime, a frenzied act which is strongly condemned by the whole progressive mankind as part of the genocidal war and a deliberate vicious move. In 1966 and 1967, the US aggressors already contemplated the possibility of destroying the Red River dyke system. Most recently, on the night of April 30, 1972, in Texas, this design was disclosed by bloodthirsty Nixon himself when he declared dykes a military target. Everybody knows that for the DRVN, a tropical country having many rivers and much rain, the dyke system is of special importance in national construction and the people's life as a whole. As the dyke system is first and foremost to protect millions of hectares of land and crops from floods and to defend the lives and property of dozens of millions of civilians living inside the dyke system during the rainy season, attack on it constitutes a genocidal crime against men and vegetation. It is a mass murder making use of rains and floods. Over 25 years ago, after World War II, at the Nuremberg Tribunal and in the United States as well, the German fascists were strongly condemned for their criminal destruction of dykes in Holland. And now, it is the US itself who is indulging in the same offence against the DRVN, but on much larger scale and in defiance of universal indignation.

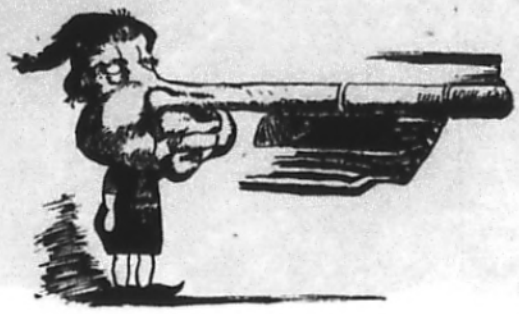
Such a course of action of the warmongers in the White House and Pentagon is the most concentrated expression of the dastardliness of their crimes in Viet Nam.

Their aims are to kill people en masse in the coming rainy season and cause a lasting famine to the North Vietnamese, hoping to undermine their socialist construction and their capacibilities to assist the South in the anti-US for national salvation war of resistance and ward off the unavoidable failure of "Vietnamization" in South Viet Nam. Heavy setbacks have made Nixon insane. How can he check the progress of revolution in South Viet Nam with new crimes against the North?

To fight the US aggressors and save their country is every patriotic Vietnamese's task. Neither violence nor wickedness can shake the will and determination of a people who are resolved to fight for independence and freedom.

The South Vietnamese people strongly condemn and denounce to world public opinion such intolerable atrocities of the Nixon gang who should be aware that their frenzy will only exasperate the South Vietnamese army and people's hatred and stiffen their will to fight to a finish.

As the German fascists who had destroyed dykes in Holland were sentenced to death by Nuremberg Tribunal, history will not let their American counterparts in Viet Nam go unpunished.



UNABATED UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION OF NIXON'S ESCALATION

IN the past fortnight, "Support Viet Nam" activities have been continually staged in several parts of the world.

Willi Stoph, G. Husak, E. Girek, Moktar Ould Daddah, M. Traore, O. Palme; the Cuba-Hungary and Cuba-GDR joint communiqués issued during tours of Hungary and GDR by the Cuban Party and Government delegation led by Premier Fidel Castro; the USSR-Yugoslavia, Algeria-Guinea, Czechoslovakia-India, Guinea-Palestine, Mongolia-Czechoslovakia joint communiqués; the Finland Social Democratic Party, the Guyana Progressive People's Party, the British, Austrian, Japanese, Morrocan and Argentine Communist Parties; the GDR Congress of Peasants, the 16th Congress of the Mongolian Revolutionary Youth Union, the 8th Congress of Czechoslovak Trade Unions; the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the International Organization of Journalists have strongly scored Nixon's atrocities against the Vietnamese people in the form of bombings, mining, and destruction of dyke and irrigation work system. All of them urged an end to US escalation, its return to the Paris Conference for meaningful negotiations on the basis of the RSVN PRG 7-point solution and reaffirmed continued and full support for the Vietnamese resistance. World public opinion castigated the attacks on the dykes of North Viet Nam as a very serious genocidal crime.

"The struggle for the realization of the principles of peaceful coexistence," the Polish Prime Minister stated, "cannot be dissociated from the efforts to stamp out hotbeds of war and tension and from the support for the peoples' just struggle to recover their own sovereignty. We fully identify ourselves with the heroic Vietnamese. We are backing and shall continue to back them unreservedly. We believe that a negotiated settlement on the basis of the DRVN Government and RSVN PRG proposals is the only practical way to restore peace in Viet Nam.»

"As the US aggressors and their Saigon hirelings have been in dire straits," Malian Head of State M. Traore declared, "they have senselessly resorted to the bombing of the DRVN and blockade of Haiphong port. It is an act of desperate folly. The Malian Government and people hold that supporting Viet Nam is the duty of all countries in the world. Those countries which are in a position to give material support to Viet Nam have to readily do it and should not grudge anything to the Vietnamese, a people full of mettle and the resolve to defend their honour and independence."

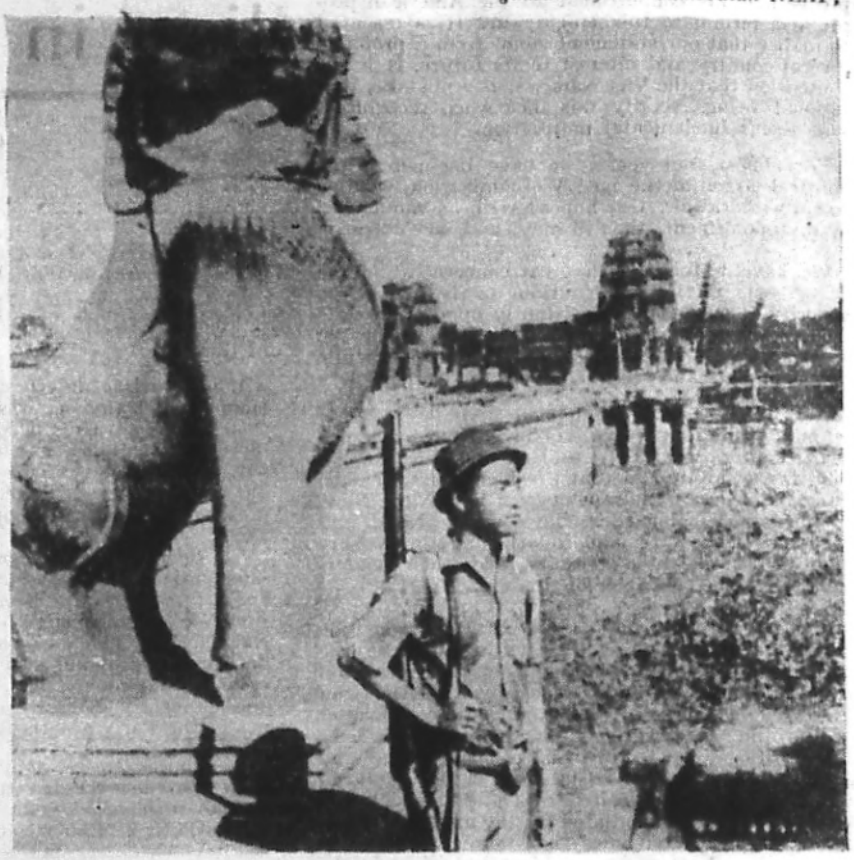
Protest meetings and demonstrations have been held in the KDPR, Britain, the Philippines, Finland, Italy, Austria, West Berlin, India, Sri Lanka. Readiness to give all-round assistance to the Vietnamese including the sending of volunteers was voiced by Koreans in meetings on June 16 in some major cities. Filipinos staged a 6-day march from several parts of the country to Manila. In London, a one-hour parade before the US Embassy took place on June 13, 15 and 16, and the drive has entered its 9th week. Under the sponsorship of peace organizations in Britain, it will be kept up till the US imperialists put an end to the Viet Nam aggressive war. In Japan, after 12 days of action, the railworkers and engine drivers' trade unions have decided to continue their staggered strike throughout the country against US aggression in Viet Nam. Anti-US meetings and marches also erupted on June 16 and 18 in Yokosuka (4,000 participants), Iwakuni (7,000 participants) and many other Japanese cities and provinces. The "Solidarity with Viet Nam Week" in West Berlin successfully wound up with a thousand-strong rally. During the week, 500 students collected about 27,000 marks for the Vietnamese.

The Festival of Finland young pioneers also held a special meeting on Viet Nam and set up a "Viet Nam stall." In Buenos Aires, a statement signed by nearly all progressive Argentine cultural and art workers appearing on May 15 in the paper *Clarin* said: "All the nations in the world including the Indochinese peoples have an inalienable right, the right to live in peace. But for over a quarter of a century now, the Indochinese have had to take up arms to defend their life, honour, independence and freedom. We urge that the US government promptly withdraw all its armed forces from the Indochinese area, fix a time-limit for the pull-out and end its air war and other military actions against the Indochinese. We insist that the US government stop backing the administrations it has installed there as tools for war and neo-colonialism. The US government must let the Indochinese peoples freely decide their own destiny without any foreign interference."

At the Stockholm International Conference on Environment, the Swedish and Indian Premiers and Chinese, Romanian, Tanzanian, Zambian, Nigerian, Syrian... delegates came out strongly against the US war of ecocide in Viet Nam. During the conference, several anti-US demonstrations were held by Swedes. On the night of June 13 alone, about 10,000 people turned out in the streets, shouting: "Nixon, murderer!" A number of participants in the conference, many Americans and a large number of foreign pressmen also joined in the march.

In the United States, preparations for the anti-Viet Nam war drive have been in full swing throughout the country. The "Citizen's Campaign to Impeach President Nixon" has distributed petitions, calling on American representatives to file suits against his pursuance of an illegal and anti-constitutional war against the Vietnamese, in violation of the Nuremberg Tribunal's principles. New organizations such as "Trade Unions Committee for 3-point Program", "Solidarity Committees with the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples" of Red, Black and Brown Americans, of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Asian Americans, "Citizen's National Organisation to Impeach President Nixon", have been mushrooming everywhere. The annual conference of governors of 380 US cities has made clear that the deep cause of the crisis in American cities, of ever more serious unemployment, poverty, housing shortage, education and medical stagnation is mainly the Nixon administration's huge military expenditures first and foremost to prolong the Indochina war while spendings for social priorities in the US have been slashed. Speaking at this conference, Senator Edmund Muskie denounced Nixon for sacrificing the US cities' interests to the stubborn prolongation of the Viet Nam war. Senator McGovern stressed that social problems in the US cannot be solved so long as the Viet Nam aggressive war is not brought to an end. New York Mayor John Lindsay pointed out that "our main task is to stop this horrible and immoral war."

Angkor Vat, the pride of the Khmer architecture guarded by the Cambodian NLAF.



Cambodia

May, a Month of Sustained Offensives

IN concerted efforts with their Vietnamese and Lao counterparts, the Cambodian army and people last May attacked the enemy without let-up, levelling, or forcing the evacuation of, a series of posts, inflicting heavy Lon Nol and Saigon losses.

According to *AKI*, in May the Cambodian National Liberation Armed Forces put out of combat 7,544 enemy including more than 1,600 captured (many of them officers), captured 3,200 arms and over 100 tons of munitions. 74 enemy positions were flattened or occupied. The Cambodian patriotic forces also flattened or drove the enemy out of 74 bases or positions, liberating large areas in Kampot and Takeo provinces, including Angkor Chay, Kirivong and Coc Andet districts, Tucnua and Tani chieftowns, and freeing 211,600 people from the enemy grip. In Takeo alone, over 200,000 inhabitants were liberated.

Meanwhile, the NLAF mounted shattering onslaughts on the enemy in provinces Northwest of Cambodia. On May 20, several onsets took place in Battambang province, some of them such as those in Cham village, Mongrutsan district, resulted in hundreds of adverse casualties.

On May 31, Saigon soldiers crossed the borders in an attempt under their "forward defense" strategy to get out of their predicament in South Viet Nam. But engaged in fierce fighting by the liberation forces, they suffered 2 battalions wiped out and a third badly mauled (all belonging to Ranger Column 41), and had to flee from the Cambodian territory.

Together with their devastating actions on the battle-front Southeast of Cambodia last April which razed to the ground 13 enemy positions, cleared the over 60 mile-long defence line on Highway One from Neak Luong to the Viet Nam border, the NLAF new feats of arms have aggravated the Lon Nol regime's confusion. Both Preyveng and Sveyrieng provincial capitals remained under siege. Many adverse positions in Kompong Treach area came under attacks or were abandoned. The Phnom Penh and Saigon troops were repeatedly and fiercely assaulted from Preyveng and Sveyrieng to Takeo and Kampot. Pressure was exerted on even Phnom Penh from many directions. Several battles took place right in the capital streets in mid-May. The Cambodian patriots broke through the adverse defence perimeter and sent to the bottom a military vessel at Phnom Penh port.

In the recent offensives, all the NLAF arms and services smoothly co-ordinated action and heavily depleted enemy manpower. A vast area of strategic significance south and southwest of the country has fallen into the Cambodian patriotic forces' hands.

The Cambodian army and people's gains in May struck another heavy blow at "Khmerization," further frustrated the "Nixon doctrine" in Cambodia and especially while the US hirelings in Phnom Penh were staging the "presidential election" farce to put a "constitutional lace" on the Lon Nol regime and oust those not in agreement with him and deceive public opinion. But bitter setbacks on the battlefields will further compound the disarray within their ranks and exasperate the enmity among them. As remarked by *AFP* on May 1st, as a result of this, their "regime continues to struggle with a deep crisis and an ever serious decline."

The only practical solution lies in the Paris Conference

(Letter from captured US Armymen in South Viet Nam to US Congress)

15 American servicemen captured in South Viet Nam have sent a letter to the US Congress urging it to take action to end the US war of aggression in Viet Nam and negotiate the total withdrawal of American troops and the return of the American POWs.

The letter, broadcast by GPA on June 3rd, reads in full as follows :

TO the Congress of the United States,

"We represent decades of captivity. When President Nixon assumed his office, we nurtured great hopes that he would honor his campaign pledge and his commitment to the American people and terminate this tragic war. It is essential to realize that our statement stems from a profound love of country and interest in its future. It is our contention that the Viet Nam war is a mistake, that rational beings rectify mistakes when recognized. This is our fundamental motivation.

For almost four years, we have listened to the political jargon of the age : Vietnamization, winding down, withdrawal... Our hopes have been vanquished by disappointment, then dismay, and now alarm.

We have watched with great concern while the heavy costs of the war continue to rise, while the majority of our people consistently oppose it, while the American image continues to be sullied. We have watched with sadness and trepidation while the spiritual and moral fiber of our society degenerates.

Finally, for four years we have looked askance at our captors when they told us that Vietnamization was a failure and that President Nixon has no intention of ever withdrawing from Viet Nam. Now, as the war is being re-escalated in the North and American troops remain in the South, we are impressed with their veracity and their understanding of the character of this war.

Now it is clear that Mr Nixon, without the sanction of his electorate, is willing to take the most provocative steps to salvage Vietnamization program. Is he willing to destroy the American POWs detained in both North and South Viet Nam ? Is he willing to directly challenge public opinion ? Is he willing to go to the brink of a larger war and perhaps beyond for an issue that is not vital to the interests of the United States, and which has been resoundingly repudiated by the majority of our people ? We are convinced that there is nothing at stake in Viet Nam which could possibly justify the recent irresponsible and provocative measures taken by Mr Nixon.

We know the Vietnamese people. They are stoic and resolute. They say that they would rather sacrifice all, than give up their struggle and they mean it. The last twenty-five years provide eloquent testimony for this proposition. The intense bombings, mining of ports, and blockade will certainly increase their death and suffering, but equally important, it will harden their resolve. They will never give up their cause.

They want the right to decide their own destiny without outside interference. The destruction of Hanoi and Haiphong was predicted years ago by their President Ho Chi Minh in words which now serve as a rallying cry for their whole nation. It will certainly not influence the course of the war, but on the contrary, prolong it and perpetuate the presence of American troops and POWs in this land.

As American servicemen, we are ready to die to safeguard our country and our families. But we are not ready to die in order to safeguard an illusion. We are not ready to die for Vietnamization or Nguyen Van Thieu or any other objective that is not supported by our people. We agree with several senators and congressmen when they say that the only practical solution to the Viet Nam problem lies in the Paris negotiations.

We appeal to you, the Congress of the United States, to obey the dictates of conscience and reason and to discharge your political and historical responsibility. Remove this millstone from our country's neck. Dispel this senseless threat which hangh over us and our children. We urge you, in all good faith, to exercise your constitutional power to force the administration to return to Paris to negotiate the complete withdrawal of American troops and the return of the American POWs. And leave Viet Nam to the Vietnamese.

The time is critical. Please take effective legislative action. We must choose between an immoral tragic war with catastrophic consequences, and the honorable future of the US. The wisdom derived from our history and experience leaves little doubt as to the proper choice.

With great respect and urgency,

Harold F. Kushner, MD. Captain, 02320775, MC, US Army, captured 6 Dec. 1967

Frank G. Anton, WO-1 3155469, US Army, captured 6 Jan. 1968

Jon Robert Cavaiani, Sgt 557-66-1197, US Army, captured 4 June 1971

John A. Young. Sp-4 RA 16-769-512, US Army, (SF) captured 30 Jan. 1968.

King D. Rayford, Pfc RA 54593659, US Army, captured 1 July 1967

Richard C. Anshus, 1st Lt. 0118121, RA, Inf., captured 8 March 1971

David W. Sooter, WO-1 3153961, US Army, captured 17 Feb. 1967

Alfonso Ray Riate, Cpl. 2135759, US M.C., captured 25 April 1967

Robert P. Chenoweth, Sp-4 RA 18956756, captured 8 Feb, 1968

James A. Daly, Pfc RA 11815566, US Army, captured 9 Jan. 1968

Frederick L. Elbert Jr. L-Cpl 2283473 US M.C., captured 16 August 1968

John G. Sparke, PFc 53755822, US Army, captured 25 April 1968

Don A. Macphail, Pfc RA 11625921, US Army, captured 4 Feb. 1969

Abel L. Kavansugh, Pfc 2374098, US M.G., captured 25 April 1968

and Jose Jesus Anzaldus Jr., Sgt, 2468970 US M.C., captured 17 Jan. 1970

WHY McGOVERN ?

WHEN South Dakota's liberal Democratic Senator McGovern entered the contest for his party's presidential nomination, very few people in the US and foreign countries alike, believed he had any chance of success, against such formidable opponents as George Wallace, Edmund Muskie and chiefly Hubert H. Humphrey, Johnson's vice-president, beaten only by a small majority by Nixon in 1968.

The first primaries brought to the fore H.H.H. rated by the May 7, 1972 Gallup poll as the possible winner at the Miami Democratic Convention. But shortly afterwards, the tide turned. Wallace fell a victim to an attempt which eventually incapacitated him for life. E. Muskie withdrew, after several failures, allegedly for want of money. McGovern achieved success after success and there was virtually no match for him left but H.H.H., representative of the party's centrist, or conservative, tendency. More support was given him in California and New York. In the former state, he won the majority of votes and in the latter, 226 out of 237. So on next July 10, he can confidently go to Miami with the pledged backing of more than 1,300 delegates. H. Humphrey seems to have lost the contest with only 347 supporters, which is a little more than G. Wallace 333. Though no longer interested in the remaining primaries, E. Muskie will maintain his candidacy to the Miami Convention and is stumping through some ten states, probably to build up his "dark horse" 's image.

McGovern's victory seems to be left in no doubt and the why of the development still unexpected in March last is uppermost on everyone's mind.

The answer is certainly not in his electioneering outlay. It has been estimated that he has at most spent as much as H. Humphrey and much less than E. Muskie who has only reaped disappointments.

Truly enough, the South Dakotan enjoys the enthusiastic cooperation of thousands of students and youths who work without pay as his agents, unlike his fellow-contestants who have to pay through the nose for their professional campaigners' at times outrageously indifferent services.

The main reason apparently lies in his positions in home and foreign policies. He has promised a cutback in the budget of the Pentagonian ogre, a reformed taxation which will make the trusts fork out more and a 1,000 dollars minimum income for every US citizen. As far as the Viet Nam war is concerned, he has pledged to stop the bombings against the DRVN upon his inauguration on January 21, 1973 and end the war in 90 days with the total pull-out of American troops and withholding of military support from the quisling Thieu. At his June 7, 1972 Los Angeles press conference, he declared his readiness to go anywhere, Paris, Geneva or Hanoi, and his conviction of the possibility to come to terms with the Vietnamese leaders on peace conditions, fair and honourable for both sides. Such a stance is not dissimilar from that of E. Kennedy who stated on June 19, 1972 in New York that if the US President does not terminate the war, the American people will do it themselves next November.

The Drafting Committee of the Democratic Convention platform seems to align itself with McGovern on the Viet Nam issue, if it is still far from sharing his views on internal problems. Extracts from the draft published by the papers take Nixon to task for not having lived up to his promise to bring the Viet Nam war to a close, describe his Vietnamization as a fraud and emphasize that a Democratic Administration will withdraw all the GI's from South Viet Nam, first thing when in power, if by then the war has not been stopped.

Nixon who has secured the necessary number of supporters to stand for a second term as Republican President has thus in McGovern an eventual rival. It is true that he commands the leverage of power with which one can indulge in, and cover up, a lot of infamies, including breaking nightly into the headquarters of the Democratic Party to bug them, the illegal detention of a woman (Martha Mitchell) for knowing too much about Nixon's secrets and the theft of the keys of the forthcoming Democratic Convention meeting hall. But the American voters will make a difference between the unequivocal positions of McGovern and the ambiguous and dishonest peace plans of the incumbent Chief Executive.

If the former's gains in the primaries do not yet completely vouch for it that he will be the Democratic Party's presidential contender—American political parties' conventions may spring many surprises and are frequently swayed by a weakness for "dark horses" — they are at least an indication that the US masses, and chiefly the students and youths, coloured people and a substantial segment of brain and manual workers have grown alive to their responsibility and will not let themselves be taken in by electoral lies.

Mr Nixon hopes to make the Viet Nam issue recede from the presidential race with his diplomatic juggleries. But it has come back to prominence since his televised May 8, 1972 sabre-rattle. There is every sign that his new escalation has been accompanied by a considerable lowering of his political prestige which may also lead to his fall.

XUAN KHANH

SOUTH VIET NAM CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE SOUTH VIET NAM NATIONAL FRONT FOR LIBERATION